

By STUART EARP Wycombe 1, Leatherhead 1

WHEN Chris Kelly put Leatherhead one up in this Isthmian League Premier Division match on Saturday, it seemed Wycombe Wanderers would go down to their second defeat in five days.

GAMESMANSHIP

But showing great character, the Blues fought back on level terms within 40 seconds and dominated the last 20 minutes. In the end, the point apiece was about right as neither side deserved all three in a rather scrappy game marred by many niggling incidents and stoppages.

Once again Wycombe's lack of forward power marred their overall performance but praise should go to the two strikers, Tony Horseman and Dylan Evans who shouldered the task of making the running and worked tirelessly throughout the 90 minutes.

Graham Mackenzie and Mick Hollifield were the pick of the four man midfield line up which often looked dangerous in approaching the penalty area. Too often, however, Wanderers seemed to run out of ideas on the edge of the Leatherhead box and the patient build-up was wasted.

In the first half, it was Leatherhead who made most of the running and it took some fine saves from goalkeeper Peter Spittle to keep them out. Peter was deputising for the absent John Maskell and once again emphasised his claim for a regular place in the side.

He was in action as early as the third minute when he kept out an effort from Kelly following a free kick. Hollifield and Mackenzie replied for Wycombe but Leatherhead continued to look more dangerous and Spittle did well to knock down Billy Salkeld's vicious volley after 25 minutes.

As always, however, Leatherhead brought a touch of so called gamesmanship into the match which always spoils their overall performance. The way they kicked the ball away before Wycombe free kicks was totally unnecessary and there were many niggling, minor fouls that ruined the flow of the game. Referee Colin Downey had to put up with more than his fair share of 'lip' from some of the players but there was seldom an incident when he produced the book to put an end to the trouble. When he did, it was to caution a Wycombe player.

Wycombe's first booking of the season came after Spittle had saved at full stretch from Kelly's angled drive in the 40th minute. Leatherhead were attacking again when Paul Birdseye and John Baker seemed to collide as Baker went for goal. This followed a bad foul by the Wycombe full back on John Cooper which obviously influenced Mr Downey's decision to book Birdseye. I felt Paul was a little unlucky for the collision with Baker seemed accidental.

It was the veteran Horseman who provided Wanderers best effort of the half just before the break. His 28 yard free kick was perfectly chipped over the defensive wall and looked destined for the top corner until Swannell flew across and scooped the ball away.

Rain falling in the second half made control difficult and it was the greasy surface that robbed Hollifield early on when he lost control inside the box. Wycombe however, looked more dangerous in this half and Hollifield almost put them ahead after 63 minutes. Horseman and Evans combined well to set up the chance but the final pass to Hollifield was just too strong and he lifted his shot over the top as Swannell came racing out of goal.

Kennedy, who came back well after a lethargic first half, forced a good save from Swannell in the 69th minute but a minute later Wycombe conceded an elementary goal when their defence, for once, let them down. Swannell's long goalkick was misjudged by Alan Phillips and bounced

through to Kelly. Wanderers were short of cover and Kelly raced on before crashing a shot past the helpless Spittle.

It was here that the Blues showed great character by equalising in 40 seconds. From the re-start Bob Davies made ground up the left wing and then crossed to the six yard line where John Priestley had made an early run. He got to the ball a split second before Swannell and headed home. It was one of the few times Wycombe managed to get a midfield player into the box early to support the attack.

With the crowd now buzzing, Wycombe had their best spell of the game. Priestley drove a low, hard cross into the box and Phillips was only a yard wide of a post. Then Wycombe's centre half got up well to reach a corner but saw Mick Cook clear Kennedy's effort off the line.

Leatherhead, always looking for another goal on the break, were firmly on the rack for some 15 minutes but they weathered the storm and were helped by Wycombe's tendency to give the ball away in the last five minutes.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies, G. Mackenzie, H. Kennedy, J. Priestley, M. Hollifield, A. Horseman, D. Evans, Sub S. Pratt (not used).

LEATHERHEAD: J. Swannell, J. Bailey, D. Malley, D. Reid, R. Eaton, M. Cook, W. Salkeld, J. Cooper, C. Kelly, J. Baker, J. Doyle, Sub C. Brooks (not used).

Referee: C. Downey (Isleworth).

Half time: 0-0 Goalscorers,

Wycombe — Priestley (71).

Leatherhead — Kelly (70).

Attendance: 1,100.

PETER Spittle, who stood in most capably for John Maskell in the match against Leatherhead on Saturday, may keep his place when Wycombe Wanderers meet Hendon tonight (Tuesday) in the Isthmian League Premier Division.

Spittle, second choice to Maskell for much of last season, turned in an excellent performance in the first half of Saturday's game and made three first class saves. His performance could persuade manager John Reardon to retain his services for a match Wycombe must win to get up with the early leaders in the division.

Only two clubs can sport a 100 per cent record after three matches — Dagenham and Barking. It was Barking who handed out Hendon's heaviest defeat of the season on Saturday when they thrashed them 3-0.

Latest table

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION (up to 27/8/77)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dagenham	3	3	0	0	10	3	9
Barking	3	3	0	0	7	1	9
Enfield	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Tooting	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Hitchin	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Kingston	3	1	2	0	5	2	5
Lehead	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
Staines	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
Sutton	3	1	1	1	5	2	4
Carlton	3	1	1	1	6	5	4
L'stone	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Wycombe	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
W'stow	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Hayes	3	1	1	1	1	1	4
Southall	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Tilbury	3	1	1	1	5	6	4
Boreham	3	1	1	1	5	8	4
Slough	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Hendon	3	0	1	2	1	6	1
Croydon	3	0	0	3	3	8	0
Bishops	3	0	0	3	4	9	0
Woking	3	0	0	3	2	8	0